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THE ARMY CAREER AND ALUMNI PROGRAM: WILL THE ARMY TAKE
CARE OF ITS OWN AS IT DOWNSIZES?

BY

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

THE ARMY CAREER AND ALUMNI PROGRAM:
WILL THE ARMY TAKE CARE OF
ITS OWN AS IT DOWNSIZES?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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As the Army downsizes over the next five years, it is imperative to establish an enduring system to meet the transition needs of our soldiers. The Army has initiated the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) which is a comprehensive transition program for soldiers separating from the service both voluntarily and involuntarily. This study does a review of the background of the program to include the significance of the FY 1990 Veteran's Benefit Amendment package for soldiers involuntarily separated after 30 September 1990. The study examines the need for ACAP and lessons learned from transition programs from a historical perspective during World War I and II, Korea and Vietnam. The ACAP program design, functions, and organization are discussed in detail. The study provides observations and conclusions about the potential of the program. Recommendations are furnished that may assist the ACAP.

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INTRODUCTION

The "Desert Storm" is over. Thousands of soldiers are deploying back from Southwest Asia to installations in United States and Europe and will begin outprocessing from the Army. Now, very like the victorious conclusion of World War II, these soldiers will return to the civilian sector, their homes and communities in a heightened era of American patriotism and pride. Initially, the surge of soldiers leaving the service will be those enlisted soldiers and officers held beyond their obligated tour of service because of the "Stop Loss" program in effect during Desert Storm. Simultaneously, the Army will begin the largest down sizing of the force since demobilization after World War II. Unfortunately, thousands of outstanding soldiers who have served their country honorably, many in combat, will most likely be involuntarily separated from the Army.

Statement of the Problem

In the immediate future, the Army will commence the first major reduction of the all-volunteer force since it was created in 1973.¹ The Army has not provided an effective personnel transition process during past reductions of personnel, nor does the present transition process in place meet the needs of soldiers who fully deserve a better system. The Army has initiated the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP). A pilot program mandated by Congress is underway in five stateside and two overseas locations.² The full implementation of

the program will begin 30 June 1991. The purpose of this paper will be to review the goals, background, objectives, functions, design, and organization of the program, critique and draw conclusions, and make appropriate recommendations.

Limitations

The Army Career and Alumni Program is designed for all departing active duty and reserve component soldiers, family members and Army civilian employees. This paper will focus only on soldiers and their families. The Stop-Loss program severely curtailed implementation of the pilot phase of the program. Feedback was limited from soldier surveys and measurement of initial success by transition managers. This study of the Army Career and Alumni Program was accomplished by review of information papers, written plans and policy, interviews of personnel in the Army Personnel Command, telephonic interviews with transition systems managers at Fort Polk, Fort Carson, and Fort Knox, the pilot civilian contractor and a visit to the ACAP pilot field site at Fort Myer.

BACKGROUND

The FY 1991 Defense Authorization Bill mandated that the active component of the Army reduce its actual end strength of 737,000 personnel in FY 90 to 520,000 by the end of FY 1995. This could require a reduction of over 40,000 soldiers annually until the end of FY 1995. ³ An escape clause in the FY 91 Authorization Bill allowed the Army to avoid cutting the 42,000

personnel that normally would have been required if operation Desert Shield/Storm and the Stop-Loss program had not occurred.⁴ Historically, the Army has separated approximately 150,000 soldiers annually.⁵ Obviously, this means the Army faces the challenging task of transitioning some 180,000 to 192,000 soldiers to the civilian sector each year through 1995.

On 18 December 1989, Congress passed a Veteran's Benefit Amendment package that included a pilot program to furnish employment, and training information, and services to members of the Armed Forces within 180 days before such members are separated from the Armed Forces.⁶ The pilot program was to be for a three year period with the office of the Secretary of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Defense working together. The Secretary of Labor was to report back to Committees of Veterans Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives on the findings and conclusions of the pilot program.⁷ The Army was to take the lead in establishing an effective transition program for the Armed Services. The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs would steer the program with a small general officer task force with personnel from DCSPER, PERSCOM, Department of Labor and numerous other agencies. Their task was the development of the overall program, the ACAP model, and mobilization of resources.⁸ This was the birth of the Army Career and Alumni Program.

The FY 1991 Defense Authorization Act was not only important to the Army because of the extensive downsizing it was ordered

to undertake, but also for further authority and funding for the expansion of the job assistance program for separating service members. Additionally, the bill defined the term "involuntary separation" and included a valuable benefits and services package for members involuntarily separated from the service.⁹ The bill further refined for the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs the employment assistance and job training assistance programs that had been established for the pilot program by Congress in December 1989. The experience gained earlier from the pilot program was to be used to accelerate the program for full implementation for all designated Army installations in the United States and overseas.¹⁰ Furthermore, the bill provided significant severance benefits for soldiers involuntarily separated from active duty or fulltime National Guard duty after September 30, 1990. These important benefits included the following: (1) enlisted separation pay; (2) transitional medical care dependent on length of service; (3) preseparation counseling; (4) employment and job training assistance; (5) commissary and exchange benefits for two years; (6) use of military housing for reasonable rental charge for up to 180 days; (7) relocation assistance for personnel overseas; (8) excess leave up to 30 days or permissive temporary duty up to 10 days for relocation activities; (9) extension of DOD school privilege for remainder of school year for dependent children; (10) preference for affiliation with Guard or Reserve units; and (11) storage

of baggage and household goods for one year.¹¹ Now, with the full authority and funding for a transition program and a package of severance benefits for soldiers involuntarily separated, the Army had the tools to fully implement a comprehensive program.

PRINCIPLES, GOALS and OBJECTIVES of ACAP

The Army set forth its build-down philosophy based on the following principles; personnel are to be treated with care, compassion, and common sense; the quality of our force is to be protected; readiness must be sustained; and future force structure must be fully supported.¹²

The principles listed above go hand in hand with the goals stated for the ACAP program.¹³ The first goal is the retention of quality force. Second, the transition of personnel will be accomplished in a caring, disciplined, and organized manner. Third, the program synchronizes existing services for transitioning personnel. Fourth, ACAP will serve all transitioning populations equally. Fifth, the program will be ready to surge for involuntarily separated personnel and their families. Lastly, and equally important, is the creation of an enduring system that lasts beyond the surge of stop-loss, the redeployment of forces from Southwest Asia and the downsizing of the Army over the next five years.¹³

If these principles and goals can be adhered to then the program will be able to sustain and maintain the full

support of Army alumni. This support will be vital to sustain the quality and shape of the force in the future which will be composed of the sons and daughters of successful alumni who were treated with care, compassion and dignity, whether they were separated from the Army voluntarily or involuntarily.

The stated objectives of ACAP are also interrelated to the principles and goals. Three of the six objectives are key to the success of the program. The program is to serve as the commander's primary resource agency for developing, coordinating, and delivering soldier and family transition services.¹⁴ Second, the program is to provide a comprehensive system to assist transitioning personnel by integrating and tailoring all services to their needs and acting as ombudsman when services do not meet standards or the expectations of the customer.¹⁵ A third objective is to reduce unemployment among those leaving the service with the creation of job assistance centers (JAC).¹⁶ Further discussion of the principles, goals and objectives of ACAP are provided later in the study.

WHY DOES THE ARMY NEED ACAP?

Historical Perspective

There were lessons to be learned from the World Wars and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts that demonstrated a need for the newly conceived ACAP. The size of the reduction the Army is about to undergo in no way compares in size to the massive demobilization after World Wars I and II.

During WWI the Army was reduced from over two million to 200,000 soldiers in 18 months from 1918 to 1920.¹⁷ George C. Marshall referred to the demobilization of the Army as "the destruction of 1920".¹⁸ The crash demobilization was characterized by total lack of planning and crisis management. The separation process was relatively simple. At 30 demobilization camps established across the country, soldiers were moved through a sequence of stations that included: medical examination; determination of disability, review of service records; and disbursement of final pay, travel allowance and bonus. They were then issued a new uniform and officially "mustered out" of the Army.¹⁹ This was the extent of their transition.

There was an effort by the War Department to attempt to provide employment assistance for soldiers returning to civilian life. The philosophy was that a soldier's return to private life was "to be something more than a glad homecoming, handshaking and storytelling. There must be jobs for the men".²⁰ An Assistant Secretary of War had responsibility for coordinating programs to help veterans find jobs. An advertising campaign for hiring returning veterans entitled, "Put Fighting Blood in Your Business", (sounds effective to use again today) was established. Citations were issued to firms that rehired all of their employees who had served in the Army or Navy. By January 1920, over 68,000 citations had been issued to employers who had demonstrated their support to veterans. Additionally, for soldiers with technical skills

their credentials were circulated among some 25,000 businesses.²¹ The War Department's expressed policy that "no service man will be considered completely demobilized until a job has been found for him" was reflected in the success it had in placing service members in jobs.²² In a little over a year from 1918 to early 1919 the United States Employment Service had placed 70% of 1,330,000 men in jobs.²³ However, by the spring of 1919 Congressional support for the program began to abate and adequate funding for continued operation was disapproved.²⁴ The War Department and private agencies worked on to continue employment services for veterans, but the program was never as productive as before. The government had provided a fairly effective transition for soldiers on short notice and with little preplanning with training programs for the unskilled and employment services for all. The program was short lived and temporary; the Army needed a program that was lasting!

General George Marshall was keenly aware of the failure of early planning for demobilization during WWI. He initiated planning as early as 1942 for the massive personnel demobilization to take place after WWII. The Army would reduce its manpower from high of 8,300,000 men to 1,500,000 in just ten months.²⁵ The Government and military planners were mindful of the high unemployment and postwar depression that had been experienced in the earlier World War.²⁶ By July 1943, a special planning division for the War Department recommended

six major entitlements to President Roosevelt for military personnel at the war's end.²⁷ In the President's first public address to the Nation concerning demobilization he detailed the entitlements military personnel should receive.²⁸ These included mustering out pay for time spent job searching, unemployment insurance, education and training (later to become the GI Bill), crediting service time for employment compensation, additional hospital facilities and pensions for the disabled. Veterans were also granted loans up to \$2,000 and job assistance by Veterans Placement Board.²⁹

The German winter counter-offensive in late 1944 left V-E day and the beginning of demobilization still in doubt. Nevertheless, planning continued and a pilot separation center was established at Fort Dix in 1944 to test separation procedures and train personnel. Like post-WWI, separation centers were set up across the country to place returning soldiers as close to home as possible to improve their morale and save transportation costs.³⁰ The separation process was accomplished in 48 hours through a series of stations starting with equipment and uniform inspection, turn-in and replacement; medical exam; comprehensive personnel records check; separation counseling; finance record review and payment of all entitlements; and a discharge and departure ceremony.³¹ There were significant improvements made to the separation process learned from WWI experience and are equally important for today's transition program. The first improvement was in the personnel records check. This was extremely important for verification for

the new GI Bill benefits (education, unemployment compensation, loans), and employment. Second, counseling for the soldier was significantly improved. The Adjutant General branch had established a formal counseling school and turned out 320 trained counselors for the separation centers.³² The formal counseling program was instituted to help the soldier make a smooth transition to civilian life by informing him of his veteran benefits and rights, offer vocational and educational guidance, and present options for National Service Life Insurance.³³

The last step in the separation process was a departure ceremony. The War Department took the opportunity in a formal ceremony to express its gratitude to discharged soldiers for their service to the nation. A field grade officer and chaplain conducted the ceremony beginning with a speech encouraging good citizenship in their return to private life. This was followed by presentation of commendations and discharge certificates.³⁴ This was an excellent improvement over the WWI separation system.

The separation process was not without problems. The public's desire to have the soldiers home as fast as possible caused the Army to accelerate the discharge program, as a result, separation centers were severely taxed.³⁵ Initially, there were not enough trained counselors; facilities were overcrowded; soldiers were sent to the wrong center without records; and commanders of units and separation centers were not informed of recent changes in discharge criteria.³⁶

These problems brought thousands of irate letters from soldiers and parents resulting in investigations by the House Military Affairs Committee. Despite the problems, the discharge of over 6,800,000 soldiers around the world in such a short span was exceptionally impressive. ³⁷

The Army conducted an important survey in 1945 of one thousand discharged soldiers from four separation centers to determine attitudes toward separation procedures and evaluation of information provided. Although 95% were "very or fairly well satisfied" with the separation center, there were several areas where soldiers were concerned about lack of information. ³⁸ The subjects mentioned most frequently by soldiers about which they desired more information included: hospital and medical care, insurance, loans for homes or business, pension claims, job opportunities, aid for education, and problems adapting to civilian life. ³⁹ Not surprisingly, many of these same concerns were identified in a 1990 survey by U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Services which will be discussed later in this study. Another concern of soldiers was where to go for information after their discharge. The veteran wanted to know where to go for more information without having to write letters, or make numerous phone calls. ⁴⁰ A lasting transition program beyond a separation center that operated only following a major demobilization was needed for the Army.

The Korean War was the turning point in the twentieth century in the demobilization of the Army. It was the first of three limited demobilizations (Korea, Berlin build-up and

Vietnam) that were different from WWI and WWII by the significantly smaller number of total individuals mustered out; the slower pace with which it was accomplished; and the size of the final reduction of troop strength from wartime levels.⁴¹ A Veterans benefits program was in place and was no longer a major obstacle in planning for demobilization. Over a two year period from 1953 to 1955 the Army was reduced by about 28%. This attrition became a serious problem because the Army lost thousands of competent officers and noncommissioned officers who no longer desired to continue their military career.⁴² The strength and composition of the Army had been reviewed at the highest levels of government and a decision made to reduce the size of the Army.⁴³ Increased readiness and firepower, new technology, and improved efficiency would compensate for the reduction of the size of the Army. Although the policy decision had been made and implementation underway for the reduction, there was concern by the Secretary of the Army in maintaining a career military service that was attractive to patriotic young Americans, and one that retained quality soldiers.⁴⁴ Although this philosophy was greatly espoused, there was no effort to implement a program for the transition of soldiers to fulfill these goals.

The Nixon doctrine enunciated in 1969 called for a shift in strategy and priority from the war in Southwest Asia to the nation's commitment to NATO in Europe. It also declared an unwillingness to continue providing manpower for conventional warfare, particularly in deterring or conducting "sub-theater

or localized warfare." ⁴⁵ The Army's end strength had reached a peak of 1.57 million soldiers in 1968 before the phase down and the reduction in force of 800,000 soldiers began for the next five years. ⁴⁶ In 1969 the Nixon administration began to move toward an all-volunteer force and an end to the military draft. ⁴⁷

Lessons learned from "Project Transition"

As early as mid 1967, the Army began planning to make itself more attractive to potential volunteers by providing additional education and vocational training for soldiers prior to their exit from the Army. ⁴⁸ The program known as "Project Transition" (PT) was to equip soldiers with skills that would increase their chances of employment in civilian life prior to separation from the service. ⁴⁹ The program was similar to ACAP in several ways. It provided extensive counseling and training in skills such as resume writing and networking with a wide variety of employers for job placement. The program was fundamentally different in that PT provided vocational skill training and provided actual job placement.

Five years after the establishment of a pilot Project Transition program, the Army employed the Department of Daytime Programs & Special Projects, University of California at Los Angeles to "assess and evaluate its effectiveness and provide the basis for future policies and procedures." ⁵⁰ This was a comprehensive study team with expertise and experience in

veterans special education, counseling, and vocational training composed of educators and counselors educated at the doctorate level and several ex-servicemen. When this study was conducted in 1973 the Army was in the midst of creating the modern volunteer Army (MVA). Like the ACAP, the Army wanted to know if the existence and benefits of project transition were an inducement to future volunteers. The teams conducted on-site visits at four major installations and reviewed responses of written questionnaires from 49 Conus installations.

The assessment made by the study team is valuable in demonstrating the need for the program during the Vietnam period and the comparison that can be drawn with the current period in time of the Army. It also serves to present potential pitfalls for ACAP to avoid during full implementation. The following lessons learned extracted from the study are appropriate for review: ⁵¹

- The purpose of Project Transition was not clearly stated and therefore implemented differently at installations. Some emphasized "skill training"; others "job placement" in preparing soldiers for re-entry in civilian life. Priority for support of different groups, such as: retirees, disabled, combat specialties with low civilian marketability or no skill, and those ineligible for reenlistment were not established.

- PT did not have mission status and as a result did not receive the priority it required. This was identified as the most significant problem in the program.

- Attitudes and actions towards the program by many

civilians and military personnel could be characterized as negative, confused, and unimaginative because of the lack of specific guidance and direction.

- Closer coordination and communication was required between civilian and military personnel involved in PT in order to work together as a team to accomplish the common goal of transitioning soldiers back to the civilian sector.

- There was no system to evaluate the quality and quantity of work produced by PT staffs and directors to hold them accountable for their work.

Despite the problems identified by the UCLA study team it concluded that:

"it appears PT could be a fine recruiting tool for a Modern Volunteer Army. It certainly lends credibility to the claim that the Army is interested in the welfare of the men and women who volunteer, and would provide reassurance to the nation that, as people leave the service, they will leave with a skill marketable in civilian life." 52

Unfortunately, Project Transition was labeled with a bad reputation and never received the support, credit, and recognition the program deserved. It was eventually terminated. The weaknesses observed and recommendations made by the UCLA study team are important enough that this document should be required reading by those in leadership positions of the ACAP program, especially Transition Assistance Managers at installation level. The following additional quote from the UCLA study very appropriately states the essence of why ACAP is needed and its purpose: "the program must be a viable one, fulfilling the purpose for which it is intended, strong and

successful enough to attract participants and to enhance the reputation of the Army to the Nation as a whole as well as to future volunteers." 53

ARI Special Report - "Making The Future Happen Sooner"

At the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Army, the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences conducted a study of thirty thousand enlisted, commissioned and warrant officers in June and July 1990. BG Stroup, Director of Military Personnel Management, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, stated that "the downsizing of the U.S. Army is inevitable" in a memorandum to the Army Research Institute (ARI) requesting them to conduct a survey "to determine the attitudes and concerns of our soldiers about the changes that will take place." 54 The survey was designed to provide an overview of soldiers' attitudes, perceptions and intentions concerning Army downsizing. 55 Important subjects appropriate to this study included: the Army experience as preparation for civilian jobs; specific personal and family concerns about involuntary separation; financial and emotional resources for separation; career plans and intentions; and advice to others on joining the service. 55

The ARI study showed a need for a social support system like the ACAP to help relieve the stress and problems of involuntary separation. The survey contained questions on what soldiers' concerns would be if involuntarily separated and what help they would need in transitioning to a new

career.⁵⁶ The study found 12 areas about which soldiers would be very concerned (over 25%) or extremely concerned (over 50%), if involuntarily separated. Their concerns included: separation pay (70%), health and dental care (63%), securing a job (61%), unemployment compensation (60%), health insurance (58%), advance education (48%), finding a place to live (46%). child care and schools (37%), spouse employment (36%), life insurance (32%), where to live (29%) and the GI Bill (28%).

⁵⁷ Recalling the survey conducted in 1945 mentioned earlier in this study, it is significant to note that the concerns expressed by soldiers then are very much the same in 1990.

There were other significant findings in the ARI survey that indicate a positive trend in the Army that the ACAP can capitalize on to continue to enhance the image of the Army and the sustainment of a quality force. Soldiers said the following about skill transferability and their influence on recruiting:⁵⁸

- 80% to 90% say that the Army has had a positive effect on skills and characteristics that can help them get a civilian job.

- 70% say they been taught valuable skills that they can use in civilian jobs.

- 40% would tell a good friend that it is a good idea to see a military recruiter.

- 60% would tell someone they met to enlist in the Army.

- 68% would like to see their son join the military,

while 28% would like to see their daughter join.

These positive survey indicators show that ACAP has the potential to be a very significant factor in maintaining and improving the image and the retention of a quality force for the Army.

Another important area that soldiers are concerned about is the financial impact on them and their families if they are involuntarily separated. These findings also indicate a need for the ACAP and its importance and ability to assist soldiers in an orderly and organized transition to the civilian sector. The ARI survey found: ⁵⁹

- Debt exceeds savings (available if time needed on job search) for enlisted and warrant officers.

- 25% of the force would also lose spouse income because of relocation if separated.

- 77% report it would be difficult financially to be unemployed for 2 or 3 months to find a new job.

Soldiers saw a variety of job search tools available should they be involuntarily separated and require assistance. Those most important included: ⁶⁰

- Labor market information and job banks.
- Training and counseling.
- Time-off (not charged to leave) for interviews and relocation.

With the 1989 Veterans Benefit Amendment Package, the ACAP now has the authority, access, tools, and capability to meet and help solve all these concerns of soldiers and their families

as they transition to the civilian sector voluntarily or involuntarily.

Current Transition System Weaknesses

The Army Personnel Command's ACAP briefing provides an excellent listing of the Army's present transition process weaknesses except at those installations where the pilot ACAP has been implemented.⁶¹ These require amplification to further illustrate the need for ACAP.

The start of transition for most soldiers begins 15-30 days prior to terminal leave in the company orderly room with the issue of installation clearance papers. Generally, the exceptions to this are retirees who have received briefings as early as two years prior to retirement, or soldiers who may have participated in the Department of Labor Transition Assistance Program (TAP) conducted at five major Army installations.⁶² The system is often cold and impersonal. The person responsible for transition at this point is usually the unit First Sergeant who is ordinarily only interested in insuring the clearance of all mandatory locations on the installation prior to a soldier's terminal date of service or terminal leave beginning date. Good units insure soldiers are recognized with presentation of appropriate awards and Army label buttons for honorable service. The exceptional unit may make an extra effort to insure the soldier is aware of his benefits or where to go for more information.

Prior to implementation of a test program of TAP in May

1990 there has been very limited job assistance services available for soldiers since the termination of Project Transition in the 1970's. For family members, the Army Community Service (ACS) program for Family Member Employment Assistant Program (FMEAP) has been available for sometime but has never been promoted enough to insure wide knowledge of the program through-out the Army community.⁶³ Furthermore, the program is authorized for active duty soldiers but only on a space available basis and third priority behind family members of active duty soldiers and DOD civilians.

There are other significant weaknesses in the current system that confirms the need for ACAP. It does not provide a central point of contact where a transitioning soldier can go to find out additional information about his or her benefits, nor is there an dedicated transition agency to assist soldiers when problems arise in dealing with the numerous services and external agencies. Additionally, there is no feedback procedure in the system that allows soldiers to evaluate and critique the quality of service provided by the myriad of organizations on an installation. Furthermore, command involvement is generally by exception only when problems that cannot be resolved are brought to the attention of the chain of command.

This section has shown through historical perspective of past wars and downsizing, a previous transition program, and a recent survey of soldier concerns that there is a very real need for ACAP. The next section of this study will describe

the pilot ACAP design and organization, and assess its ability to deal with the weaknesses described above and soldiers concerns expressed in the ARI survey.

ACAP PROGRAM DESIGN

The ACAP was founded on the premise that human resources must be managed strategically in accomplishing the short and long range needs of the Army and done in accordance with the principles, goals, and objectives described earlier in this study.⁶⁴ The design of the program assumed that there is very little funding flexibility remaining at installation level for new transition services.⁶⁵ The program was divided into the following four components: existing, enhanced, new and future services. Each are briefly described below.⁶⁶ First, there are many important and excellent programs already available that can be given additional emphasis by Commanders and ACAP staff members that do not require additional resources. Second, there are enhanced and new initiatives that are within the Army's authority that can be accomplished with no or minimal additional resources. Third, the future initiatives component was to establish a permanent transition program, working extensively with external agencies and providing information and training for those transitioning personnel to effectively accomplish their goals. Many of the future initiatives are just now coming into fruition in the ACAP pilot program and with the passage of the 1990 Veterans Benefit Amendment Package. Highlights of the first three program components and the progress

on future initiatives are further discussed below.

Existing Services

There are many programs already in place that assist soldiers and families in transition. The purpose here is not to provide a laundry list and description of each but to point out existing services that need further emphasis and publicity. Many commanders may not even be aware such programs or services exist for their soldiers and families. The ACAP Transition Assistance Office plays a major role in assisting commanders and his or her soldiers with these programs. Appendix 1 provides a description of selected programs, many have been improved or enhanced by passage of the Veterans Benefits Amendment Package discussed in the background section of this study. ⁶⁷

Enhanced Initiatives

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel recommended three initiatives in the ACAP MOI that can be achieved at installation level without cost and within Army authority. ⁶⁸ These initiatives assist the chain of command in demonstrating to the soldier and his family that the Army is genuinely concerned about his or her transition, particularly for those involuntarily separated.

The first enhanced initiative is entitled "Commander and Family Conference". Commanders and supervisors will meet with soldiers and family members being involuntarily separated

within five days of formal notification. The purpose of the conference is to assess the trauma reaction to career interruption, identify special needs, and refer soldiers and families to the right installation service providers. A commander's inventory guide has been developed to assist commanders and supervisors for counseling. When ACAP is fully implemented at all installations, commanders will be able to refer their soldiers directly to the ACAP office after the family conference.

Soldiers are authorized permissive TDY up to 10 days for job search, family relocation and house hunting. This was by exception to AR 630-5 until the passage of the benefits package by Congress in November 1990 for soldiers involuntarily separated.

Leader training must be initiated at all levels for the ACAP to be successful. Orientations about the program should be conducted at primary leadership development courses (PLDC), company commanders course, officer and NCO professional development training periods and installation orientations. Telephone interviews with Transition Assistance Managers at Ft. Myer, Ft. Carson, and Ft. Knox indicate this is being accomplished at a rapid pace on those pilot program installations that were not as involved in training for Desert Shield/Storm like Ft. Polk. The PERSCOM ACAP Division Chief has conducted orientation briefings at the Army Inspector General School.⁶⁹

The Army must also add orientations to the Pre-Command Course for battalion and brigade commanders at Ft. Leavenworth

to show the importance of the commander's role in the transition process especially during this period of downsizing.

New Initiatives

Two new initiatives have been introduced that are dependent on additional resources at installation level. They have the potential to be most valuable to transitioning soldiers and their families. ⁷⁰

The DCSPER recommends the establishment of a library corner to provide easy access to job hunting resources and equipment for resume writing and completing job applications. Libraries would provide an area with job search references, a bibliography of job hunting and career planning materials, and equipment for preparing job hunting correspondence. ⁷¹ Additionally, the Department of Defense in conjunction with the Department of Labor and Veterans Affairs has established a job search Transition Assistance Program (TAP) at five Army installations. ⁷² This is a three day seminar taught by the Department of Labor for personnel separating or retiring. Its purpose is to provide information and appraisals for career decisions and training for writing resumes, completing job applications and undergoing interviews. ⁷³ Both of these services will be provided by a private contractor at the 57 job assistance centers (JAC) in the U.S. and overseas when ACAP is fully implemented. Installations without a JAC will need to establish their own.

Future Initiatives

The ACAP Division at PERSCOM has made significant progress in a short period of time in turning the future initiatives established by the DCSPER into reality. The approved future initiatives include establishing the ACAP Transition Assistance Office (TAO) and the contracted Job Assistance Center (JAC).⁷³ Both are now operational and serving soldiers at the seven pilot sites. These are discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Another initiative that is now complete is a transition guidebook for separating services. The guidebook which was printed in March 1991 is a comprehensive, well organized and an easy to use reference of benefits and services, available during and after separation.⁷⁴ (Recall the WW II survey when soldiers said they needed reference material after separation. p.11.) The guidebook is now ready for distribution to all separating soldiers.

There are several other significant initiatives in this component of the program which are ongoing. They are listed in Appendix 2.⁷⁵

Transition Assistance Office (TAO) Functions

The Transition Assistance Manager (TSM) is the linchpin of the ACAP at installation level and is the primary staff officer to the installation commander and all levels of command for transition services for soldiers and their families. The TSM has other major roles that include:⁷⁶

- Quality management of the entire transition process

on the installation.

- Troubleshooting and resolution of service complaints.
- Integration of all transition services to eliminate duplication.
- Customized delivery of ACAP services for the transitioners' needs.
- Advocate for transition related matters for soldiers and families.
- Quality assurance of the job assistance center (JAC).

The TSM must not only perform the roles above but is also responsible for communication, publicity, and evaluation of the program to insure its effectiveness and success.⁷⁷

The TSM gathers support for the program and actively encourages transitioner participation through commanders and the NCO corps. The TSM also has responsibility for the quality of the program by improving existing services and the transition process. Additionally, the TSM measures the program's success by reviewing client critique sheets, feedback from commanders and on-site evaluations.

The TAO is the first step in the process for transitioning soldiers, retirees and their families. The Transition Services Specialist (TSS) interviews the client, assesses the needs, develops a blueprint for transition and makes referrals to the appropriate service providers.⁷⁸ The TSS must also carry out follow-up with the client and service provider for fulfillment of the service. Appendix 3 provides a visual illustration of how the TAO office functions and specific

services provided by the TSS.⁷⁹ There is a large menu of service providers, sources, federal and state agencies and associations that need to be considered in evaluating the needs of the client. Appendix 4 provides a listing of the various agencies.⁸⁰ The challenge to the TSS is to insure that all the needed services are integrated into an individual transition plan.

Job Assistance Center (JAC)

The JAC is a contracted customer service agency providing job skills training, job referral, and career counseling.⁸¹ The JAC assists soldiers and their families in making informed career transition decisions by providing accurate and timely job information.⁸² The JAC also provides the following services:⁸³

- One central place for job hunting.
- Professional job assistance expertise.
- Standardized seminars and workshops.
- Individual counseling and assistance.
- Ties to external job hunting resources (National Employer Database).
- Career reference library.

In addition to the services mentioned above, the contractor also provides a client workstation that includes state of the art equipment for preparation of resumes, job applications and other job correspondence.⁸⁴

The TSM provides the JAC contractor logistical and administrative support. The TSM also supervises the following

additional tasks: ⁸⁵

- Determines the number of clients in seminars and workshops and coordinates scheduling.

- Establish the JAC hours of operation.

- Evaluate JAC on a quarterly basis.

- Review 10% of JAC client critiques quarterly.

Like the TAO, the JAC must coordinate with numerous agencies on the installation, state and federal agencies, and with many of those established in the Army Employers Network. Appendix 5 illustrates the JAC activities and agencies it must interface with to provide effective services to the clients. ⁸⁶ The JAC process from the initial interview with the client until referral to the Army Employees Network is shown in Appendix 6. ⁸⁷

ACAP ORGANIZATION, APPLICABILITY AND PRIORITY

Organization

The PERSCOM policy is the ACAP is to be organized as a special office working for the Installation/Garrison Commander. ⁸⁸ Appendix 7 illustrates the relationships of the ACAP office with the Human Resource Council, clients, commanders and coordination authority with service agencies on the installation. ⁸⁹

The staffing of the TAO office consists of one TSM, grade GM-13; one to four TSS'S dependent on installation size, grade GS-11; and one administrative clerk. ⁹⁰ Installations have

been classified by size to determine TAO staffing and JAC locations as follows:

- Large installation with over 20,000 Personnel.
- Medium installation with over 10,000 Personnel.
- Small installation with over 5,000 Personnel.

A total of 67 TAO and 55 JAC sites will be established in the U.S. and overseas by full implementation of the ACAP program on 30 June 1991.⁹¹ All sites have been designated except 17 sites in USAREUR pending approval of CINC USAREUR as of the writing of this study.⁹²

Applicability and Priority for the ACAP

The ACAP is a mandatory installation clearance point for all active duty soldiers with 180 days of continuous active duty; separating involuntarily, voluntarily or for retirement.⁹³ This program is for soldiers who have served their country honorably. Therefore, soldiers separating under conditions of "dishonorable", "bad conduct", or "other than honorable" are not eligible.⁹⁴ Family members and Reserve Component soldiers are also eligible for the ACAP services.

A soldier's priority for the ACAP services will be established by time remaining prior to separation for the following time periods:⁹⁵

- Priority I: Army personnel within 90 days or less.
- Priority II: Army personnel within 91-120 days.
- Priority III: Army personnel within 121-180 days.
- Priority IV: All other eligible personnel on a space available basis.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Observations

An extensive review of all available ACAP information papers, the ACAP MOI, ACAP Interim Pilot Guidance, and ACAP Site Implementation Directive was conducted during the study. A number of significant issues and concerns were determined in assessing the potential of the Pilot ACAP to provide a quality transition program for our soldiers as the Army begins downsizing and redeployment from Southwest Asia:

- The installation TAO'S ability to handle the surge of separating and retiring soldiers after Stop Loss is lifted.
- The quality of training of TAO staffs by Army contractors.
- The adequacy of facilities for pilot sites.
- Availability of pilot program client critiques to measure initial success and make improvements in the program.
- The growth of the Army employer network.
- The Command and Installation Support for the program.

A visit was made to the Ft. Myer ACAP prior to the lifting of Stop Loss and telephonic interviews conducted with TSM'S at Ft. Carson, Ft. Polk, Ft. Myer, and the DPCA at Ft. Knox. shortly after the lifting of Stop Loss. Opinions about the initial start-up and success of the program were nearly identical.

- All TSM'S were concerned about the surge from Stop Loss overwhelming their office. Most had worked closely with the AG, receiving data from the enlisted and officer management

file to forecast Stop Loss projections for determining workloads. The four pilot ACAP sites interviewed seemed to be able to cope with initial workload during the opening weeks after the lifting of Stop Loss.

- All TAO'S reported satisfaction with contractor training for their personnel.

- All TAO'S were content with the size and condition of their facility except one. The Ft. Myer TAO office is congested and not conducive to the expected traffic flow. The TSM has acquired additional floor space in the same building which should solve the problem.

- Although Stop Loss had been lifted only several weeks, soldiers completing critiques of the program were very positive about the services provided from the TAO and JAC. Feedback was especially positive from many senior non commissioned officers. Several TSM'S reported full workshops and seminars with more of each being scheduled rapidly.

- The interim contractor for the pilot JAC is Research Consults Incorporated (RCI). TAO'S are quite pleased with their initial performance to date. The Army National Employers Network has over 1300 corporations, companies and agencies in the system and 700 service providers. ⁹⁶ The network is growing at a rapid rate due to contractor efforts and word of mouth about the ACAP. TSM'S report the new RCI software for writing resumes and cover letters is outstanding. Equipment for the workstations is "state of the art" with laser printers for quality job related correspondence.

- Command and Installation support for the pilot phase at the four sites listed above appears to be excellent. Installations have provided the best facilities available. All TSM'S are exceptionally busy providing orientation and information briefings about the program.

- PERSCOM policy is that the TSM'S will work directly for the Installation/Garrison Commander. None of the four installations interviewed were in compliance with this policy. None of the TSM'S seemed concerned about working for the DPCA, AG, Education Officer or Assistant Director for Community and Family Support. Compliance with the stated policy appears to be in the best interest of strong support for the program.

- The DPCA at Ft. Knox was concerned about the grade for the Transition Service Specialist. He felt the grade was too high and left no room for growth within the TAO. ⁹⁷

Conclusions

- The TAO'S and JAC'S throughout the entire ACAP are mixed with retired senior NCO'S, officers, and experienced government employees who exhibit an exceptional dedication and enthusiasm to working with soldiers and making this program succeed. Their contribution will be key to the continued success of the program.

- The ACAP system process is accomplished with a personal touch to the transitioning soldier. There are very few forms to fill out. A counselor looks the client in the eye and puts demographic information directly into a computer.

- An excellent policy is recommended by PERSCOM to

use a panel process for selection of TAO personnel. Our soldiers deserve the most experienced and best qualified for the job.

- A sound plan is in place to evaluate and correct weaknesses in the program by critique, on site evaluations and the selection process of personnel in the TAO.

- The overall program is well conceived, organized and should provide a large return to the Army for the investment required. It is still too early to measure the success of the ACAP but there is every indication the program is on track.

- Congress has provided a benefits package for separating soldiers that will offer tangible assistance.

- The need for this program has been clearly established by a historic review of downsizing of the Army since WWI. The lessons learned from "Project Transition" from the Vietnam era should not be forgotten.

- As in most Army programs for soldiers, the key to success of ACAP is the commander at every level. The installation commander will also be instrumental to the program's success.

- The ACAP program briefing conclusion slide says "The Army Career and Alumni Program will meet the needs of our transitioning personnel". The Army now has a program that has the potential to live up to its slogan "The Army Takes Care Of Its Own" if the program can endure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Many small units/detachments, such as ROTC units and Recruiting stations, will not have close accessibility to an ACAP Site. Soldiers in this category should be authorized TDY to an installation to participate in the Job Assistance Center process.

- Some Installation Commanders will do a better job with the ACAP than others. A positive incentive program for excellence should be established.

- ACAP orientation briefings should be scheduled for the next several years at the Pre-Command Course, CGSC, and the Army War College.

- The ACAP plays a major role in the Army's short and long range goals. The task of insuring that soldiers are provided an effective transition system is important enough to be on every Commander's OER Support Form as a performance objective.

- The Army must continue to publicize the benefits of the program and encourage command support especially during the downsizing of the Army over the next five years. Publicity for the program should be expanded to include military journals at the Army branch schools, and the periodicals published by the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College.

APPENDIX 1 Existing Programs

<u>Title</u>	<u>Objective</u>
Human Resource Council	To provide a forum to exchange information among key personnel on quality of service programs. Improve coordination between agencies. Make appropriate feedback and recommendations on implementation of ACAP.
Secretary of the Army Designee Status	To provide continued health care for family members who have recently lost statutory entitlement to such care.
Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP)	To provide comprehensive employment assistance to family members who are relocating as a result of a military sponsor's permanent change of station.
Extension of Government Quarters Privilege	To allow involuntarily separated soldiers to remain in government quarters up to 60 days for those establishing hardship to move at termination of service.
Extension of DOD Section 6 School Privilege	To reduce the trauma of dependent children as a result of their parent's involuntarily separation. Children living with parents or a guardian may complete the school year.
Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS).	To assist enlisted soldiers in achieving career goals by identifying military training which translates into civilian education.
Priority Placement for DA Family Members	To provide priority placement service for DA family members relocating or effected by base closure or overseas draw down.
DOD Homeowners Assistance Program	To provide for financial assistance to military homeowners who are forced to sell their homes as a result of base closure or reduction in the scope of operations at an installation.
Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA) Authority	To provide non-competitive employment to specified Vietnam era and post Vietnam veterans. The emphasis is on veterans who require the greatest employment assistance.

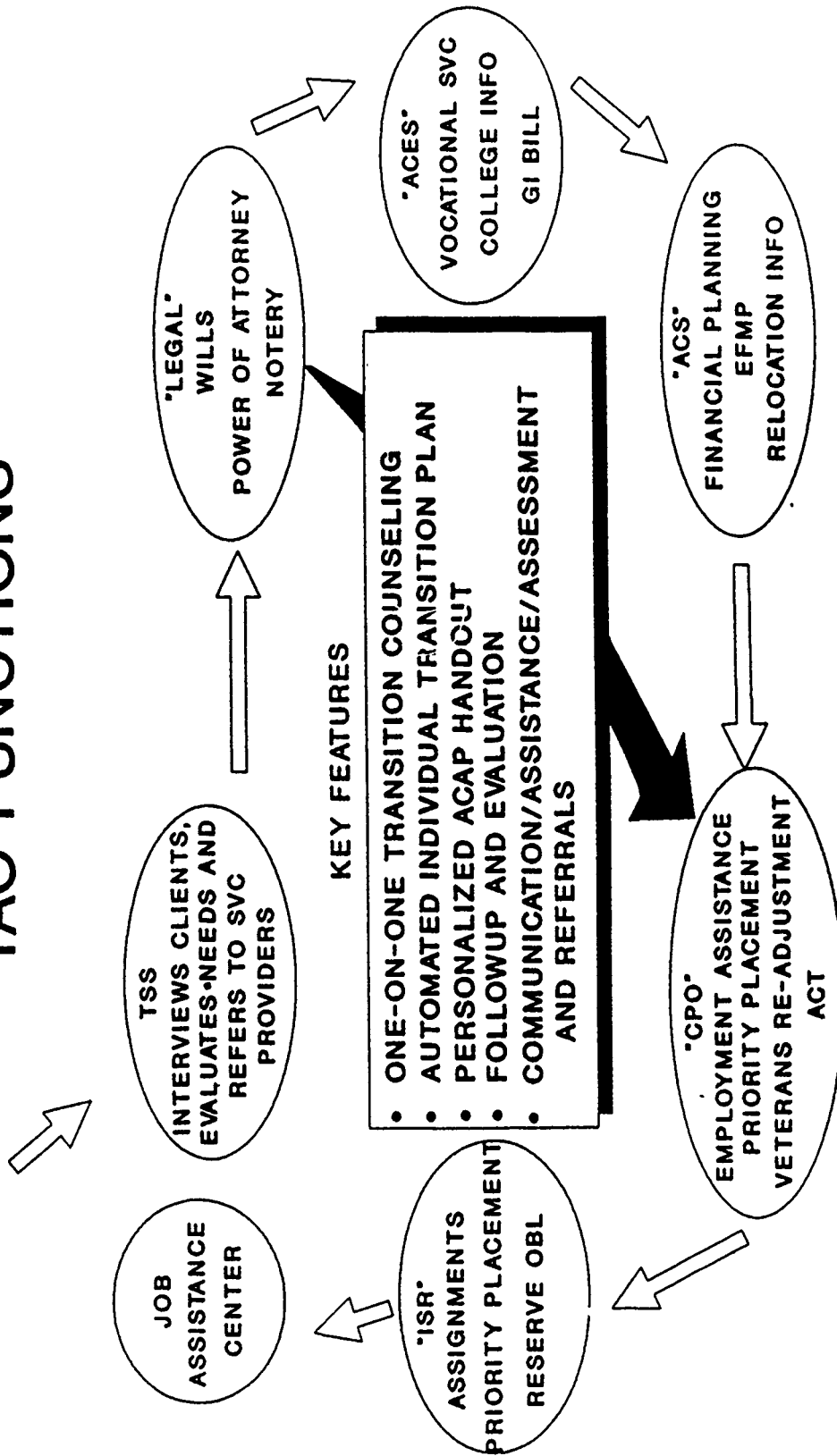
APPENDIX 2

Other Future Initiatives

<u>Title</u>	<u>Objective</u>
State-Local Government Placement Agreements	To coordinate with innovative state and local government programs which provide job search skills training, skill retraining, and job placement into private sector jobs.
New Careers in Teaching	To identify military personnel who have the skill, qualifications, and desire to teach in the Nations schools and assist them in meeting certification requirements.
Expanded Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Automated Referral System	To develop an OPM program which produces expanded opportunities for engineers, scientists, other hard skill disciplines and "hard to fill" jobs. Applicants are listed on an automated referral system.
ACAP Hotline	The U.S. total Army Personnel Command will establish a dedicated 1-800 and Autovon phone lines to provide a focal point to answer policy and procedural questions from the field.

APPENDIX 3

TAO FUNCTIONS



ARMY CAREER & ALUMNI PROGRAM

MANAGEMENT ARCHITECTURE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES

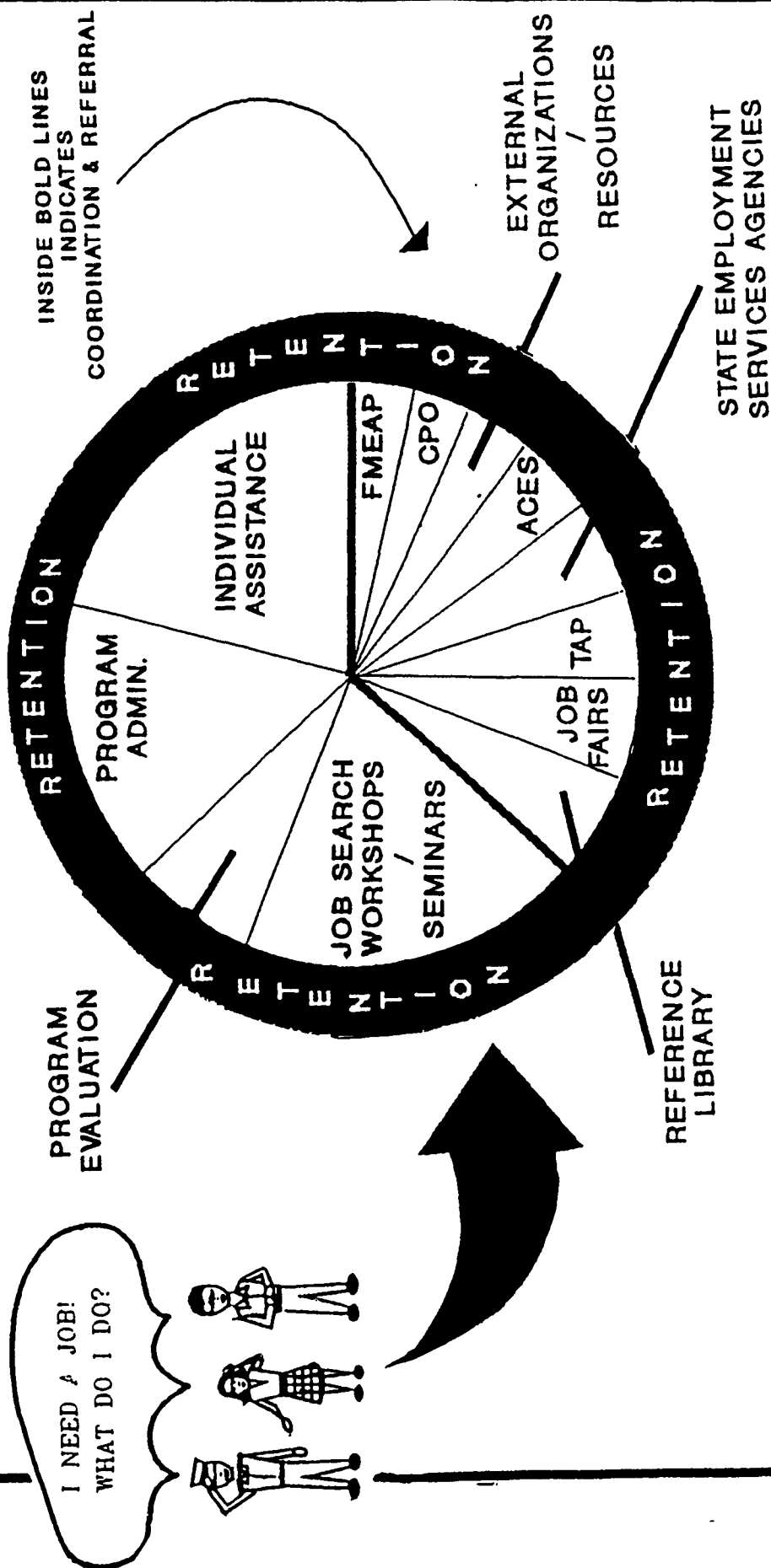
ARMY INTERNAL		ARMY EXTERNAL		
CORE SERVICE SOURCE	SERVICE SOURCE	FEDERAL AGENCIES	STATES	ASSOCIATIONS
Army Community Services	Health Services Command	DOL	Florida and Others (Up to 49)	NATIONAL NCOA
Army Continuing Education System	Director of Logistics	VA	State Apprenticeship Programs	TROA
Civilian Personnel	Chaplain's Activities Office	OPM	Targeted Jobs Tax Credit Certification	AUSA
Military Personnel	DODDS Schools OCONUS	CIA	State Employment Services	COMO
Library	Director of Engineering & Housing	Postal Service	Alternative Teacher Certification (New Careers in Teaching)	NAUS
Retirement Services	Reserve Recruiting	DEA		LOCAL Chamber of Commerce
Section VI Schools	Staff Judge Advocate	FBI		Fraternal & Service Groups
Human Resources Council		PEACE CORPS		Job Fairs
		OTHER		

Transition Services Manager (TSM)

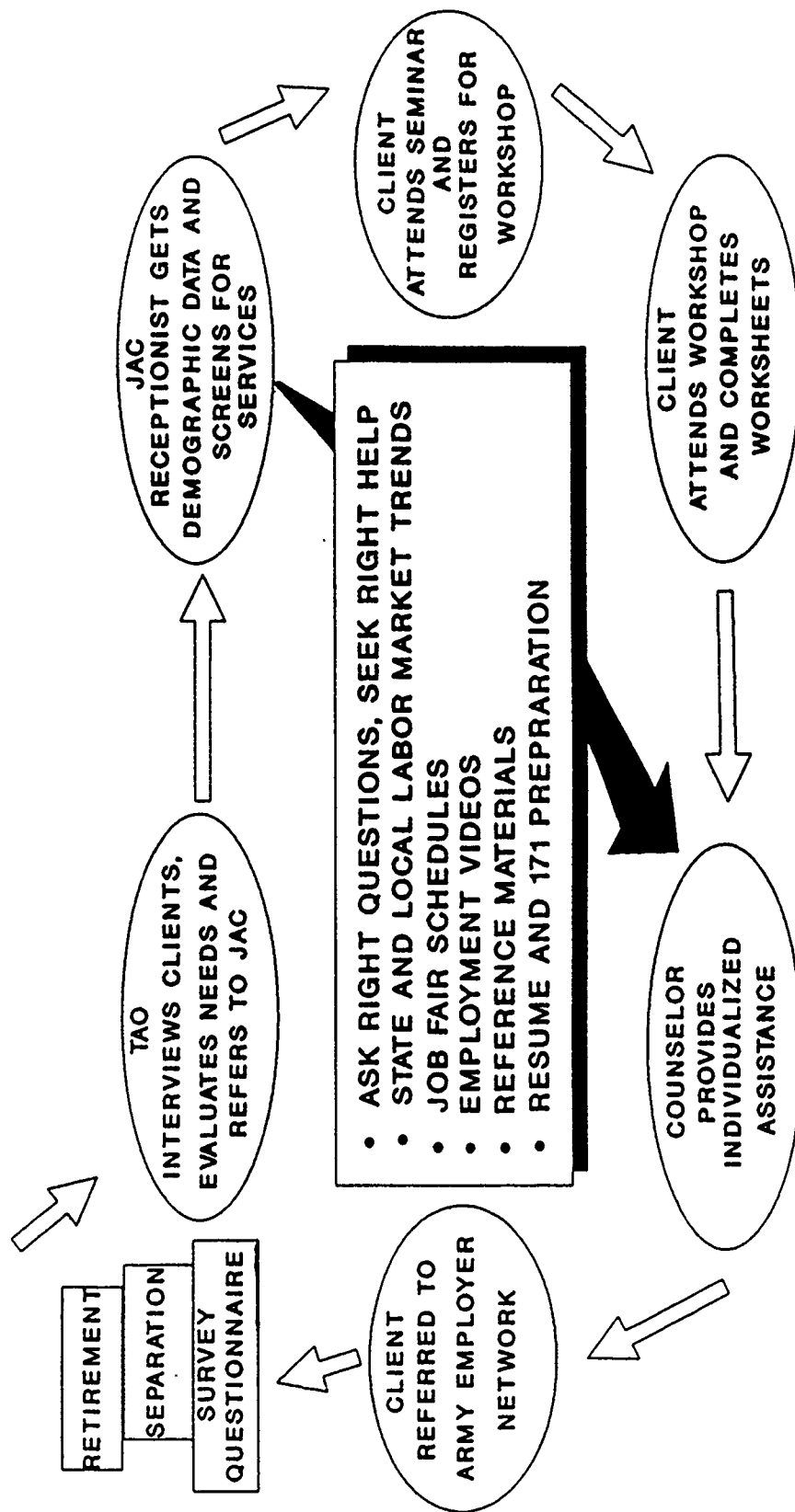
The TSM is the critical linking mechanism at the installation level.

ARMY CAREER & ALUMNI PROGRAM

JOB ASSISTANCE CENTER ACTIVITIES

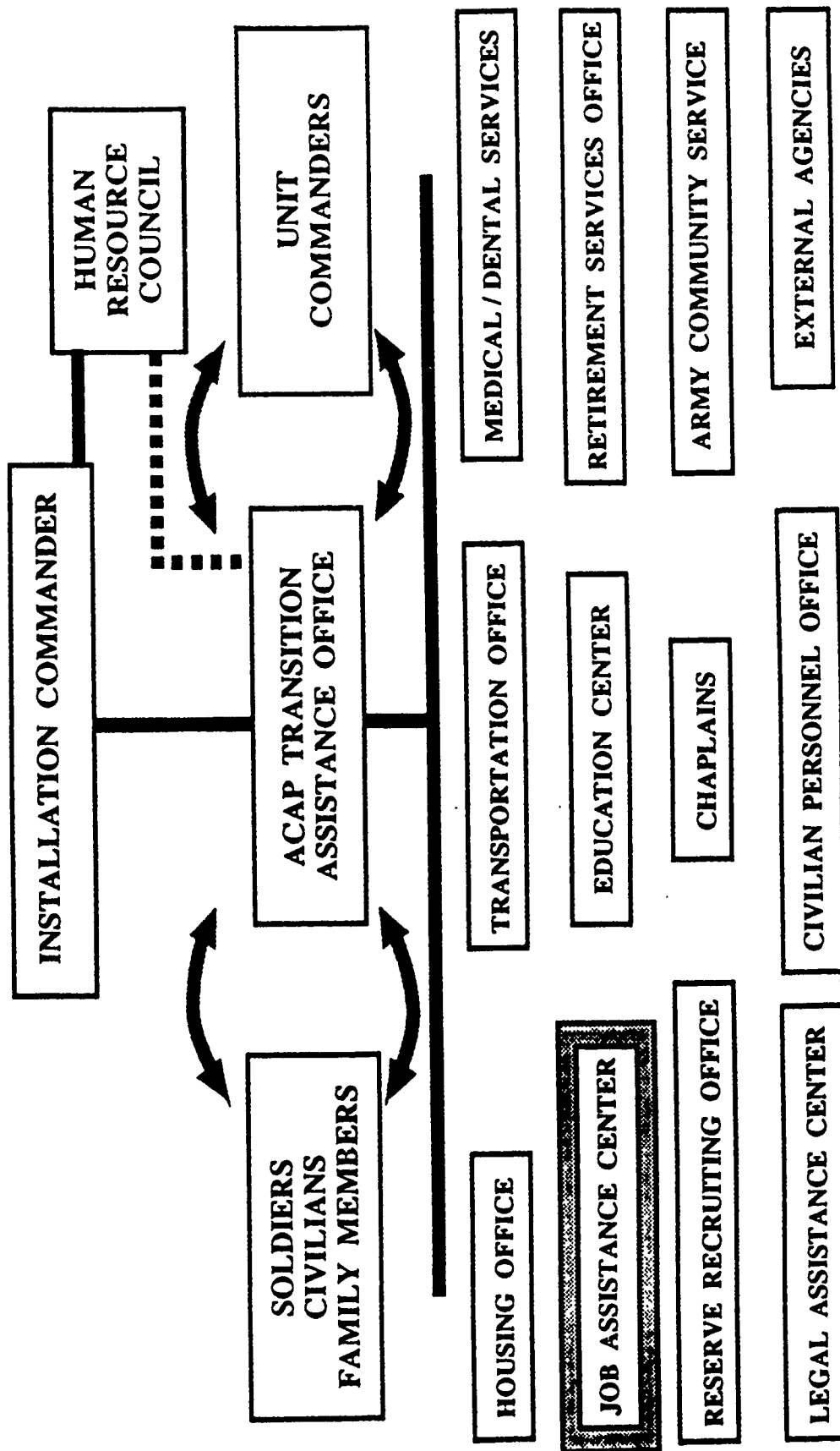


JOB ASSISTANCE CENTER



ARMY CAREER & ALUMNI PROGRAM

APPROVED INSTALLATION ACAP SUPPORT STRUCTURE



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